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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VATICAN 005521

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS NEW IRAQI CHALDEAN PATRIARCH

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) IN TWO MEETINGS WITH THE AMBASSADOR, THE NEWLY ELECTED PATRIARCH OF THE CHALDEANS AND FORMER BAGHDAD AUXILIARY ARCHBISHOP EMMANUEL-KARIM DELLY, LED OFF HIS REMARKS BY CONVEYING HIS GRATITUDE FOR U.S. ACTIONS IN IRAQ TO REMOVE SADDAM HUSSEIN FROM POWER AND HIS HOPE FOR RAPID IMPROVEMENT IN THE SECURITY AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY. HE URGED THE U.S. TO "WORK MORE QUICKLY IN EVERY RESPECT" TO GIVE THE IRAQI PEOPLE MORE TANGIBLE DEMONSTRATIONS THAT THE U.S. LIBERATION WILL BRING A BETTER LIFE. PATRIARCH EMMANUEL III, AS HE WILL BE CALLED, ASSERTED THAT THE TERRORISTS DISRUPTING IRAQ WERE BY AND LARGE "NOT IRAQIS" BUT CAME FROM OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY, AND HE URGED THE U.S. TO TIGHTEN ITS CONTROL ON THE BORDERS TO PREVENT FURTHER INFILTRATION. THE PATRIARCH EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR HIS PREVIOUS CONTACT MEETINGS WITH CPA HEAD BREMER, AND HIS DESIRE TO CONTINUE WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER WITH THE CPA. HE EXPRESSED OPTIMISM ABOUT INTER-RELIGIOUS COOPERATION IN IRAQ, NOTING THAT THE CHALDEANS RETAINED GOOD TIES WITH BOTH SHIITE AND SUNNI LEADERS. FINALLY, THE CHALDEAN LEADERS ASKED THAT THE AMBASSADOR CONVEY THEIR STRONG CONCERNS ABOUT NEPOTISM IN THE ALLOTMENT OF JOBS IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. END SUMMARY.

THE NEW PATRIARCH EMMANUEL III

[1](#)2. (C) FOLLOWING AN EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD AT THE VATICAN CALLED BY POPE JOHN PAUL II, THE CHALDEAN BISHOPS ELECTED ARCHBISHOP EMMANUEL-KARIM DELLY, RETIRED AUXILIARY OF BAGHDAD, AS PATRIARCH EMMANUEL III. AS HEAD OF THE CHALDEANS, A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY WITH 800,000 MEMBERS IN IRAQ, AND ANOTHER 500,000 MEMBERS LIVING IN IRAN, SYRIA, LEBANON, EGYPT, TURKEY AND THE UNITED STATES, HE WILL BE AN IMPORTANT VOICE FOR RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN IRAQ. THE PATRIARCH'S ELECTION IN ROME FOLLOWS A DEADLOCKED VOTE IN SEPTEMBER, IN WHICH NEITHER AMERICAN BISHOP, SARHAD JAMMO OF SAN DIEGO NOR SYRIAN BISHOP ANTOINE AUDIO, WERE ABLE TO SECURE A MAJORITY. DELLY, THE EMINENCE GRISE OF THE CHALDEAN BISHOPS, EMERGED AS A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE BEING FROM IRAQ AND SPEAKING THE SYRIAC LANGUAGE OF THE CHALDEANS. FOLLOWING THE ELECTION, THE POPE URGED IRAQI CATHOLICS TO "WORK TO JOIN FORCES WITH ALL BELIEVERS IN RESPECTFUL DIALOGUE, WHICH WILL FAVOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A STABLE AND FREE SOCIETY" IN IRAQ.

GRATEFUL FOR SADDAM'S REMOVAL

[1](#)3. (C) AT A MEETING IN VATICAN CITY DECEMBER 5 AND A SUBSEQUENT BREAKFAST AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE DECEMBER 8, THE NEW PATRIARCH CONVEYED TO THE AMBASSADOR HIS GRATITUDE FOR SADDAM'S REMOVAL FROM POWER AND FOR "BRINGING FREEDOM TO MY COUNTRY." WITH SADDAM GONE, HE NOW HAD HIGH HOPES FOR IRAQ'S FUTURE. THE PATRIARCH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT LIFE IN IRAQ UNDER SADDAM HAD BEEN DIFFICULT. EVEN THOUGH SADDAM HAD GIVEN THE CHALDEAN CHURCH A DEGREE OF FREEDOM TO CARRY OUT ITS RELIGIOUS MISSION, THE CHURCH ALWAYS HAD TO BE CAREFUL, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE FIRST GULF WAR WHEN SADDAM BEGAN TO PLAY MORE UPON MUSLIM, ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS. HIS SENTIMENTS WERE ECHOED BY MANY OTHER CHALDEAN BISHOPS PRESENT AT THE TWO MEETINGS, INCLUDING BISHOP KASSAB OF BASRA, BISHOP SHLEMON WARDUNI, THE OUTSPOKEN AUXILIARY OF BAGHDAD, AND BISHOP IBRAHIM IBRAHIM OF DETROIT.

NEED TO MOVE MORE QUICKLY ON ESSENTIAL SERVICES

[1](#)4. (C) THE PATRIARCH'S MAIN MESSAGE TO THE U.S. WAS THE NEED TO "WORK MORE QUICKLY IN EVERY RESPECT" -- PARTICULARLY IN IMPROVING ESSENTIAL SERVICES. HE NOTED THAT IRAQIS HAD INITIALLY WELCOMED THE U.S. FORCES BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THEIR ARRIVAL WOULD BRING A BETTER LIFE. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS EARLY ENTHUSIASM HAD GIVEN WAY TO GROWING DOUBTS AS PEOPLE FOUND THAT THEY HAD LOST MANY BASIC SERVICES SUCH AS DEPENDABLE ELECTRICITY THAT THEY HAD HAD UNDER SADDAM. THE IRAQI PEOPLE'S WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH U.S. FORCES -- WHICH

THE PATRIARCH BELIEVED WAS THE KEY TO BETTER SECURITY -- WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER THEY FELT THE U.S. PRESENCE WAS BRINGING THEM IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS. HE NOTED HE HAD TOLD CPA HEAD BREMER THAT IF THE U.S. BROUGHT IN A FEW THOUSAND GENERATORS, THEY WOULD GENERATE ENORMOUS GOODWILL. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THE MANY POSITIVE CHANGES THAT

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INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENT THAT WOULD GIVE IRAQ A MODERN, EFFICIENT
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE LONG TERM.

SECURITY: BORDERS TOO POROUS

15. (C) THE PATRIARCH TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE SECURITY PROBLEMS IN IRAQ WERE NOT CAUSED BY IRAQIS -- WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF LINGERING SADDAM LOYALISTS -- BUT BY FOREIGN TERRORISTS FROM SYRIA, SAUDI ARABIA, AND ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION WHO WERE INFILTRATING IRAQ THROUGH ITS POROUS BORDERS. IN THIS REGARD, HE URGED THE U.S TO DO MORE TO PROTECT THE BORDERS BOTH AT CROSSINGS AS WELL AS THROUGH AERIAL SURVEILLANCE. ASKED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF SADDAM'S CAPTURE ON STABILITY IN THE COUNTRY, THE PATRIARCH AND OTHER IRAQI BISHOPS SAID IT WOULD BE WELCOME, BUT BECAUSE THE PROBLEMS CAME PREDOMINANTLY FROM OUTSIDE, THEY BELIEVED IT WOULD NOT END THE INSECURITY. REGARDING THE THREAT FROM SADDAM LOYALISTS WITHIN THE SUNNI TRIANGLE, THE BISHOPS BELIEVED THAT SADDAM ALWAYS HAD A SURVIVAL PLAN READY TO FIGHT AGAINST INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL FOES, AND WAS NOW DRAWING ON LONG-HIDDEN WEAPONS STASHES.

ROUNDING UP WEAPONS: USE CASH NOT SEARCHES

16. (C) TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF THE EXCESS WEAPONS CIRCULATING IN IRAQ, THE PATRIARCH RECOMMENDED THAT THE U.S. DEVELOP A PROGRAM TO PAY PEOPLE FOR WEAPONS RATHER THAN CONDUCT SEARCHES AND SEIZURES THROUGH IRAQI HOUSES. HE OBSERVED THAT THE IMAGES OF U.S. SOLDIERS BANGING DOWN DOORS AND ROUSING FAMILIES FROM THEIR SLEEP WAS GENERATING A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF ILL WILL AND WAS "THE WRONG APPROACH." HE ALSO URGED THE U.S. TO MOVE AHEAD RAPIDLY TO PROVIDE JOBS TO PEOPLE THAT WOULD PUT CASH IN THEIR POCKETS AND MAKE THEM LESS LIKELY TO TURN TO ARMED OPPOSITION. HE SUGGESTED EVEN A SMALL CASH STIPEND FOR EACH FAMILY WOULD CURRY MUCH FAVOR.

INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS ON TRACK

17. (C) THE PATRIARCH TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE CHALDEAN LEADERSHIP'S RELATIONS WITH BOTH THE SHIITE AND SUNNI LEADERSHIP WERE "VERY GOOD" AND THAT HE HAD "GREAT CONFIDENCE" FOR THE FUTURE OF INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS IN THE COUNTRY. ALL FAITHS HAD CONDEMNED THE TERRORIST ACTIONS, HE ADDED. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THERE WERE MANY "FANATICAL MULLAHS" WHO OFTEN TOOK TO LABELING IRAQI CHRISTIANS AS INFIDELS. THERE HAD BEEN SOME INCIDENTS OF RETRIBUTIONS AGAINST CHRISTIANS, WITH 5-6 CHALDEANS KILLED AND SHOPS SELLING ALCOHOL BURNED, BUT IN GENERAL, THE CHALDEAN COMMUNITY CONTINUED TO BE ACCEPTED WITHIN IRAQ. THE PATRIARCH'S FEAR IS THAT SHOULD IRAQ BECOME AN ISLAMIC STATE, THEY COULD FIND THEIR CURRENT FREEDOMS SEVERELY RESTRICTED. FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, HE FELT THAT IT WAS A TESTIMONY TO THE DEEPLY ROOTED IRAQI TRADITIONS OF INTER-RELIGIONS ACCEPTANCE THAT SEVEN MONTHS AFTER THE END OF THE WAR, IN A SITUATION WITH ALMOST NO POLICE OR PUBLIC ORDER, THERE HAD BEEN SO FEW RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS OR ACTS OF RELIGIOUS ATTACKS.

LIBERATION OR OCCUPATION?

18. (C) REITERATING THAT THE KEY TO A BETTER SECURITY SITUATION WAS GETTING THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ TO COOPERATE WITH U.S. FORCES, THE PATRIARCH OBSERVED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME SENSITIVITY AMONG IRAQIS THAT THE U.S. HAD GONE FROM BEING LIBERATORS TO OCCUPIERS. THE DISTINCTION WAS A CRITICAL ONE, HE EMPHASIZED. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE HAD BEEN A MEETING WITH A SENIOR U.S. OFFICIAL IN WHICH THE OFFICIAL STATED THAT THE U.S. WAS IN FACT NOW "OCCUPYING" IRAQ, A STATEMENT THAT PROMPTED A NUMBER OF OTHER RELIGIOUS FIGURES TO LEAVE THE MEETING. TO BUILD SUPPORT AMONG IRAQIS, HE CAUTIONED, THE U.S. SHOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO COUNTER THE IMAGE OF OCCUPATION. THE AMBASSADOR ASSURED THE PATRIARCH THAT THE U.S. GOAL WAS TO TURN POWER OVER TO A LEGITIMATE IRAQI GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, WHILE ENSURING A STABLE AND SECURE FUTURE.

19. (C) MONSIGNOR PHILIP NAJIM, THE CHALDEANS REPRESENTATIVE IN ROME AND A FREQUENT COMMENTATOR ON IRAQI DEVELOPMENTS FOR ITALIAN TELEVISION, EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A

BETTER RAPPORT AND GREATER CONFIDENCE BETWEEN U.S. FORCES AND

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RECOGNIZED THE PREDICAMENT FACED BY TROOPS WHO SOUGHT TO WORK WITH THE IRAQI PEOPLE ONLY TO FIND THEMSELVES AMBUSHED AND ATTACKED, AND ACKNOWLEDGED THERE WAS NO EASY WAY TO SQUARE THIS CIRCLE. THE CHALDEAN ARCHBISHOP OF DETROIT IBRAHIM IBRAHIM INSISTED THAT IRAQIS "LOVED" THE U.S., BUT WERE NOT COOPERATING BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID AND BECAUSE THEY HAD NOT YET SEEN THE BENEFITS OF COOPERATION. THE FREEDOM TO SAY WHATEVER THEY WANT DOES NOT GO FAR, HE CAUTIONED, IF PEOPLE ARE UNABLE TO WORK, LACK ESSENTIALS, AND ARE AFRAID TO GO OUT OR SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL.

GOVERNANCE: FOCUS ON REGIONS, AVOID NEPOTISM

¶10. (C) TURNING TO IRAQ'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, THE PATRIARCH OBSERVED THAT IT WAS NOT EASY FOR THE IRAQI PEOPLE TO HAVE SO MUCH LIBERTY AND FREEDOM IMMEDIATELY AFTER 30 YEARS OF DICTATORSHIP. HE NEVERTHELESS FELT THAT THE REGIONAL COUNCILS WERE FUNCTIONING WELL, AND REPRESENTED ONE OF THE MORE POSITIVE POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS. HE CAUTIONED THAT THE U.S. HAD GIVEN TOO MUCH WEIGHT TO POLITICAL PARTIES -- MANY WITH ROOTS OUTSIDE IRAQ -- RATHER THAN WORKING ON A PROVINCIAL BASIS, WHICH HE BELIEVED WOULD BE MORE REPRESENTATIVE. HE ALSO CAUTIONED AGAINST "GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE SHIITES, NOTING THAT WITH 13 OF THE 25 SEATS ON THE GOVERNING COUNCIL THEY COULD PUSH THROUGH ANYTHING THEY WANTED. THE PATRIARCH APPEALED TO THE AMBASSADOR TO CONVEY HIS REQUEST THAT THE CHALDEANS BE ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED ON CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING COMMITTEES.

¶11. (C) AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING, THE PATRIARCH AND HIS FELLOW BISHOPS REITERATED THEIR STRONG CONCERN ABOUT NEPOTISM WITHIN THE DEVELOPING IRAQI ADMINISTRATION. THEY NOTED THAT THE NEW PETROLEUM MINISTER WAS THE SON OF A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL, AND SAID THIS WAS A PATTERN THAT WOULD LOOK TO PEOPLE JUST LIKE THE DAYS OF SADDAM. TO BE CREDIBLE, IT WOULD BE VITAL FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO HAVE THE BEST PEOPLE AVAILABLE, NOT A NETWORK OF CRONIES.

THE FIGHT AGAINST TERROR IN IRAQ

¶12. (C) MONSIGNOR NAJIM WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF U.S. STATEMENTS SUGGESTING THAT THE U.S. WAS FIGHTING TERRORISTS IN IRAQ RATHER THAN FIGHTING THEM IN THE UNITED STATES. HE SAID THESE STATEMENTS CREATED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE U.S. CARED SO LITTLE FOR IRAQ THAT IT WAS WILLING TO TURN IRAQ INTO A TERRORIST BATTLEFIELD. HE BELIEVED SUCH STATEMENTS WERE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO U.S. EFFORTS TO BUILD SUPPORT AMONG THE IRAQI PEOPLE. THE CHALDEAN BISHOPS ALSO TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT IF THE U.S. WANTED PEACE IN THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST REGION, ITS POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL WOULD HAVE TO BE REVIEWED, AS IT GENERATED CONTINUING ILL-WILL. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT U.S. POLICY, CONTRARY TO POPULAR PERCEPTIONS, WAS BALANCED AND EVEN FORWARD-LEANING TO THE PALESTINIANS, CALLING FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR THE CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE, AS WELL AS AN END TO SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY, AND FURTHER ISRAELI STEPS TO IMPROVE PALESTINIAN LIVING CONDITIONS.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) THE PATRIARCH HAD HIGH PRAISE FOR CPA HEAD BREMER, WHO HE SAID HAD BEEN OPEN AND ATTENTIVE TO CHALDEAN CONCERNS. WHILE HE UNDERSTANDS THE OBSTACLES INVOLVED IN IMPROVING ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND SECURITY, HE REITERATED HIS DESIRE FOR THE CPA TO MOVE MORE RAPIDLY IN ALL AREAS TO IMPROVE THE DAILY LIFE FOR IRAQIS. OVERALL, WE FOUND THE NEW PATRIARCH TO BE VERY SUPPORTIVE OF THE U.S. DECISION TO GO INTO IRAQ, BUT CONCERNED THAT POPULAR DISSATISFACTION OVER THE SLOW PACE OF IMPROVEMENT TO THEIR DAILY LIVES HAD UNDERMINED THE IRAQI APPRECIATION FOR THE U.S. ACTION. THE PATRIARCH, AND HIS FELLOW CHALDEAN BISHOPS, GREATLY APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND PROMISED TO KEEP IN CLOSE CONTACT WHEN THEY RETURN TO THE VATICAN.

¶14. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

NICHOLSON

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